

I am pleased to be able to make this submission into ecosystem decline in Victoria. I am drawing on both my own experiences in my local area and also drawing heavily on the report by the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability Victoria Biodiversity (B) Scientific Assessments Part III.

This report highlights ecosystem decline by indicating Biodiversity decline in the state and offers recommendations which should be followed.

Further I note that since European Settlement at least 25% of Wetlands have been lost and our native vegetation is being lost at a rate of 4000 habitat Ha. per year. Of Victoria's 3300 species, 63% are on the threatened species advisory lists and we have had our share of local extinctions.

There is also the threats due to the following factors. **Habitat fragmentation**, due to clearing, housing and infrastructure development, **Climate change** causing both the change in species distribution and effecting fire frequency, **Inappropriate Fire Management**, **Invasive animals** (such as deer pigs foxes cats horses and introduced birds and **Plants** such as Chilean needle grass, Also inadequate funding of ecosystem protection and Management. Other factors include population growth, pollution, changes in water regimes and pressure on vulnerable forest types by native timber logging.

In my own area, the shire of Mitchell, our population is expected to grow from the current 40000 residents to a projected 128 000 by 2041. I think we can afford to invest in proper protection of our ecosystems in planning for development using strategies of Protection, Restoration and Offset.

Further I would like to see better use of Natural Resources by developing alternatives, recycling and reduction, Sustainability Victoria offers some great incentives to Industry along these lines. Also economies revolving around protection such as tourism rather than continued decline.

I feel we need to bear in mind the value of our natural estate and move to protect it from further loss and also aim where possible restore areas of state and national significance with the following strategies:

Strengthen laws protecting ecosystems and set goals for restoration of threatened eco systems. For example Ramsar wetlands, Alpine environments, coastal areas and, critically endangered grasslands of which Mitchell Shire is on the eastern edge. We are also home to the previously rich wetlands of Herne's and Hannah swamps which have the potential for restoration to create a wonderful asset to our shire which is poorly protected with conservation areas. The creation of new parks offer great opportunities to enhance our quality of life and bring nature within reach of our populated areas.

My home in Upper Plenty has a growing population of Rabbits, Foxes, Sambar Deer, Cats and also Indian Mynah birds compared to when we moved in 25 years ago. This has a serious effect on our local wildlife. For example the Deer are eating and killing Cherry Ballart saplings which cannot be cultivated.

I urge the Victorian Government to act to stop ecosystem decline and also reverse it by installing necessary legislation, policy frameworks and financial and human resources.

Yours sincerely

signed

Michael Watson